A Sketch of the Union Movement in Japan

Despite the fact that the Socialist Democratic party met decisive attack by the government when it was launched in 1906, the union movement in Japan was granted recognition by officials as early as 1903 because of its capitalistic union tendency.

Evidently with insight of coming trouble between labor and capital which will be inevitable according to the progress of industrial development, a political center, Tajyo Shingawas, whose popularity was a radical attracted the people by emphasizing the necessity of establishing a national labor body that stands for compromising between labor and capital.

The opinion was followed by the prompt result: "Tokyo Typographical Workers' Union" was founded on the basis of the civic federation of American, with "Mark Haana" Shingawa himself at the head of the committees. J. Sakuma, an owner of the largest typographical concern, and K. Katayama, a socialist leader, were on the committees.

Through this example, many labor unions were set forth and this grew to such an extent that in certain districts municipal laws provided that certain kinds of laborers had to join the union.

There was ferment for years underneath, yet the majority of the workers were kept in ignorance and subjection through the capitalistic management of social institutions that maintained for the sole aim to bind the people. These official trade unions were the worst of all in this respect.

But the incursions of socialism, what a hot touch to the heart of Japanese workingmen, whose class half by nature, under regime of Shogunage, was regarded as the lowest rank of the four classes, of which the Japanese feudalistic society consisted.

They became aggressive in a short time. They organized themselves into a compact class-conscious body opposed to plutocratic and aristocratic oppression, as both remain a political power against workers.

Two large bodies were organized in the economic field in 1905, inspired by "The Communist Manifesto", that are absolutely free from interference of the capitalistic influence and have no connection with the old trade unions. These were "Miners' Shisai-Kai", organized at Tahori coal mine district, and "The Miners' Brotherhood Association of Japan", organized at Shio copper mine and its mining factories where most deplorable conditions prevailed among workers. Several villages around were ruined by copper pot of the result of an ill-equipped mechanical condition. And the question whether the mine should be shut down or not has been a heated one in the lower house at that time.

These two organizations were not only the first revolutionary unions organized on the economic field but are very significant in the history of Japan's labor movement and are also of vital importance to the labor movement of the far-east in the future.

In the meantime the second national convention of the socialist party was called in Tokyo, which party, having been admitted by the government, undertook its activity through its widely circulated daily organ and several local papers. It raised a high spirit above all over the country. The convention took issue as to the tactics, whether it should stay to political or to economic action alone. In previous years the socialist had 2 conventions at Tokyo-Chiba and Myohoshi during election time. The returns showed poor results, except in Chiba where the socialist candidate polled a comparatively large vote. On the other hand the growth of the revolutionary union movement was noticeable. Migrant industrial miners associated in various localities, grew to be the center of the movement, leading many strikes and boycotts. So serious were their efforts, that the workers gained much better conditions.

The whole movement went through a process of regeneration. Very naturally the convention was inclined to abandon political action, and economic action instead be centered upon.

As for mining miners, among whom the miners' brotherhood association has a firm foothold, went on a strike in Feb. 1907, because their peaceful efforts to secure better conditions of life failed. The employer has not only rejected their demands but soon called out military to attempt to start rooting for the purpose of discriminating the strikers and causing them to lose public sympathy, tactics that are very familiar in this country.

Indigence exceeding patience, the strikers determined to defend their rights and liberty, all the miners rose in open revolt. They captured the magazine from which dynamite and revolvers were taken to be used freely. A battle-like scene continued for several days between strikers and imperial soldiers in which many were wounded and a few killed, among them the manager of the Shinano Mining Co. It was the first time that the workers red blood was shed in the land of the mikado. From that day to this, say, until the capitalist class shall surrender the machinery of production and the necessities of life, there shall not a bit of peace exist between the working class and capitalist class in Japan.

A red flag unfurled upon the mountain high is an indication of final triumph of the working class.

Following the tumult, arrests of officers of the organization were made. Fellow workers S. Minami, T. Nagaski and others, charged of being the instigators of the disturbance, were committed to stay one year in Tokyo Penitentiary, although, after all, the grand jury found them not guilty.

There are two factions in the labor movement of Japan to-day. One, represented by S. Katayama, advocates political achievements through ballot, the other, represented by D. Kataoka, insists upon possessing the earth by direct action and revolutionary communism and still is meeting a bitter fight. But in straight truth, socialist activity is somewhat overpowered by the government at present, for lack of systematic organization and education. The movement has been confused on account of their personal disagreement and their Japanese characteristic sentimentality. In this the government and splendidly realized their advantage: A defeat for the Japanese working class.

Here is an innovation of the labor movement in Japan. Determined tactic
シリアルクロープ

起業家が選挙で得た利益は、最終的には政府の政策に影響を与える。政策の成立は、選挙の結果を反映し、経済の発展を支える。

一方で、選挙制度の問題点も指摘されている。選挙制度は、利益関係者により巧みに操作されることもあり、公正さが保証されているとは限らない。

選挙制度の改革は、こうした問題を解決するための一つの方法である。
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is bodily required in this case. A more effective strategy is needed in the struggle against capitalists who exercised all possible knowledge and equipment in methods to destroy anything that might hurt their class interest.

Industrial unionism agitation should be commenced now throughout the land. We shall neither allow the capitalists to usurp the guidance of the labor organization nor the politicians to use it for their own ambition. Organizing an army of producers which aims solely for the interest of the working class, we move toward the goal of emancipation, "abolition of wage system".

The revolutionary industrial union movement in Japan was once tested in the case of "The Miners' Brotherhood Association" at Ashio and proved a success although it had unfortunately gone on prematurely. We should carry on this work again with utmost patience and skill, if necessary to the point of timidity until it will get sufficient power.

What a shock it would be to the ruling class when they learned one day that every wage earner had organized in his own interest, and our initiative anti-capitalist propaganda will have equipped the barracks of the regiments!

A vigorous agitation for revolutionary industrial unionism should be started now, right now, in Japan!

Mikado gets O.K. from Czar.

How to root out the revolutionary movement in the land was one of the important programs in the secret official congress at Tokyo which had been called on account of the controversy between China and Japan over the Amur-Mukden railroad problems in Manchuria.

Those organized "black bands" finally decided to proceed with the railroad work immediately in spite of the protest of the Chinese government, and also decided unanimously that drastic measures will be adopted for suppressing socialist and union movement.

The socialists and revolutionaries in Japan have been bitterly fighting for a long time. Not an organ is allowed to be printed there, nor are they allowed to hold a meeting.

Every active member is followed by a spy whenever he goes, and any action that might bring suspicion is closely watched.

When a few fellow workers started a paper at Komatsugawa city near Nagasaki port, the police confiscated all. When Jiu-Shiho was launched by D. Kaito, it was obliged to publish twice the same number because the first copies were robbed by the police on the way from the printer to the office of the paper without any warrant.

Consequently secret publications are now more or less isolated. Fellow comrade Tsuchida, a Buddhist priest and two other fellow workers were arrested on a charge of illegal publication.

Below is the list of illegal publications as officially given for this year:

"Law and Authority", "Quick Learning as to Socialistic Theories", "An Alarm Clock for the People", "A rehearsals in and Free Labor", "The Real Good Thing to the People", "Anarchism and its Ideal".

You know how despite the Japanese government's issue of "Communist Manifesto" and "Conquest of Bread" were suppressed.

A liberal magazine, "World-Wide Woman" was recently fined 100 yen because this paper translated "The Capital" from time to time.

A "Home Magazine" was also suppressed. The reason is simply that the editor, Miya Tatsuo, is a to-be, wife of a fellow worker who is serving in China's penal colony.

The government then decided to take final action to blow every revolutionary movement out of the country.

By 5 o'clock on Aug. 15th, under command of chief of police Takahashi himself, who is a most notorious brute, a vast number of police, divided into six squads, marched to and invaded the office of the paper "Harimand", armed with glittering swords, and demanded the surrender of all documents subscriptions for the paper, financial books and even money orders.

Misko Tatsuki, who had been in charge of business since the paper was established, being ill health for several weeks, was unable to walk at the order of arrest.

She was dragged from her bed and kicked down in the most brutal and Savage manner. Then she was carried on shoulders for a distance of 5 miles to the police station.

Another band was dispatched to make a search of all the residences where our fellow workers are living with their wives and children. Three more arrests were made the following day in suburbs of Tokyo.

The Japanese I. W. W. Propaganda League was organized and chartered on Oct. 7th through which we will push our work more systematically.

Owing to the lack of space the financial report will appear in the next issue.

Help us in our work by sending in subscriptions for the paper.

Italian fellow worker Vitacco, travels and the others at Butte, Y., sent 10 dollars to Japan in June 20th for donation to the movement. But the money went astray (i) and has never been traced. Investigation is following.

A scab's traitor to his race and an enemy to himself.

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We undertake the above being the only revolutionary workers' paper, to English speaking fellow workers as well as Japan-born fellow workers who can read English.